

Tuesday, January 25, 2000
TD & C Standing Committee Session

Nancy Walker, West Virginia, Session chair

What's Happening Around the Country

- *Sherrill Martinez, Kansas*

Nine months ago we hired a contractor to help with collecting data on the web and making a data model to be rid of redundancy. The team on the web data collection will create a model and we will do the rest of the work. We have four applications and they will be live in May. If all goes well, all four applications will be mandatory on the web for districts. From there, current staff will do additional applications themselves. We hope to have everything web-based in a couple of years.

There will be a database to collect information and that data will be edited and put into a secure data model. A set of reports will be developed and will be consistent and efficient. Besides the reports, we need to query the data. It will be queryable by August.

[Discussion with MO, who is developing the same thing, but one database will be public and the other restricted] [Discussion of how there is a problem with funding in Kentucky. Kentucky is doing a similar thing to share information within the state and it will be web-based. Kentucky puts out report cards for schools and districts to check stats. It is not queryable. They are moving in that direction.]

- *Harold Knutsen, Iowa*

This is the first year that we sent data to the DOE. We are changing software. This was done last Fall and worked well. We had some help from NCES. We sent teacher information to the state (salary, assignment, experience) and this was transmitted well on the Intranet. However, there were a few problems with transmitting data over the Internet and in some cases we went back to disks. Our enrollment is on the net. District comparisons can be done electronically. [Project Easier discussed] We are beginning with schools and districts and expanding beyond that.

- *Nathan Slater, Mississippi*

We are doing the MSIS (Mississippi Student Information System). We collapsed individual data collection into single reporting. This will be web-enabled. We collected attendance, staff, educator licensing, etc. We take this information and put it in one place and offer functionality. For example, we can track dropouts, transfer student files electronically, etc.

Our bid went to Nichols InfoTech. We went through the analysis phase based on expressed internal needs. They delivered a prototype. Then there was the testing phase. This week we begin a pilot in a lab environment. MSIS is designed to take school level data and each school will have a direct connect T1 line that feeds to the network. We gave bids to companies to allow schools and districts to get school administration software. We gave our necessary specifications to the vendors so they will know what is necessary for our communications. It will be XML format.

There will be a virtual holding area for data. When data is submitted, the district can edit it before MDE gets it. We are conducting workshops on the system. We have support and financial backing for this. It will be tough to get every school online to use this system this Fall. They are on schedule but will need a lot of training.

Question: How do you handle updates and corrections? → We have levels of access to the system. The database administrator and some other individuals can make changes. [Discussion:

IA has the same type of system. Only 2 people can change the data and that has worked well for them. LA is similar. One can verify the data but after a certain time the database will not be opened again. After that point, one can only change and extracted file.]

- *Lynn Baugher, California*

We have a number of things happening in California. For example, we are working toward student-level data collection. Because of the concern of privacy, we will collect data without names.

We collect aggregate data to the school level. There is also teacher-level data. We have 6 million kids in 8,300 schools and 1,000 LEAs. What do we do to make data collection electronic and use the Internet? [DOE web site shown] We have developed DataQuest, which is an interactive reporting site based on collected data. Users make choices. They choose the desired Subject, Level (state, county, district, school) and School Year. They then submit the query. Then a list of choices of reports appears and they can look at them. The request for this information goes to various SQL tables on a single server. Once this is started, it is very easy to add reports. There is now an interest in Course-Taking Data and data is collected down to the individual schools on course-taking.

There is one disadvantage. While this organization works well for many needs, you cannot group schools by type. We have a related but different system (QuickQuest) to query schools by type (charter, etc.) There are reports here as well, on enrollment for example. We also offer all demographic files on our site. We also have complete data files online. But there is no individual student data here. We do not even really collect it in any special way. Individual teacher information is here minus name and year of birth.

Question: Who did this? → We and our programmer did this ourselves. How long? → It took 3 months to build DataQuest and we tested it for a year. Since June, it has tripled. It is easy for our programmer to add reports. We will share the program. You will need the SQL databases. Do you track usage? → Yes, the site has a meter.

Customer Service Survey Review

Tom Szuba

How can we share information together? We can start with gathering information from forum members. [Passed out draft of survey] This covers the first round of technical issues: online internet/intranet data collection systems, web-based reporting, individual student level record systems, and decision support systems (i.e. data warehouses). We ask you to look this draft over and make recommendations to us. The purpose of this is to create a directory, so to speak, of information in order to share and have status reports. It will be turned into a web thing. The whole idea is to share expertise and experience.

[Suggestions offered on the draft: Need definitions of items (e.g. technical staff, on-line, etc.)]

In the spring, hopefully you can go to the web and fill this out. We need this directory, for example, for justification purposes to state/local/federal governments to give dollars. The idea is that the forum members would coordinate who fills out the survey. The contacts should be as close to the hands-on person as possible. The idea is that each state would fill this out once. [Discussion of local filling it out versus state filling it out] In general the state vs. local is an issue and this is why this draft survey is being given out.

Vote: One report per state is the consensus.

This report must be on-going or it will be outdated. The target release date is July 2000.
[Discussion of Data Warehouse vs. Database terms]

Comparable Status Measures

Lee Hoffman, NCES

We do not have common measures used in State Report Cards. Some suggestions are to have common state measures. This would enable schools, districts, and states to come up with performance measures comparable to other states. We also need to have common standard definitions of measures. We do not have the structure to do that. We need to make an effort to identify from state report cards what states are using to measure. We need to explore whether we can glean a set of standard measures from the school report cards or accountability reports that most states publish.

Task Force Reports

- **EDI**

Ray Yeagley, New Hampshire

There is movement in the task force. There is a new director that is tasked with defining what will be tangible products to deliver to the forum. Products are tools and documents. Tools are developed on specific products. We hope the forum will maintain ownership. We want to take it from a Jell-O state to something more firm at the MIS conference in May. There will be a meeting to update everyone and we will report to everyone on the EDI listserve. See me to be put on the listserve.

- **Technology in Schools Task Force**

Tom Ogle, Missouri

We have agreed to have someone outside the task force review it. Our task force met and reviewed a draft Guide (?). We identified key things such as data elements and key definitions and plan to have a presentation at the MIS Conference. We will have a complete draft at the Summer data conference. At that point, we will share it with internal people and present a final draft at the Winter Forum meeting. We are looking at the areas of Hardware and Infrastructure, Software, Planning and Policy, and Finance. The document will be a guide on how to collect data in an organized fashion. For a list of participants, call Carl Schmitt or John Clemons at ESSi.

- **Communications**

Nathan Slater, Mississippi

A little bit of history: Communication and Dissemination was created as a result of this group looking at our mission. We found that we were not fully fulfilling our mission; therefore, we created a subcommittee to address communication and dissemination. We worked in a couple of areas: 1) on Outreach Communications – to contact people and make them aware of the forum, 2) to promote our presence, and 3) to disseminate our products. We tried to outline our true mission with these three things. Here are some specific actions that we took, keeping in mind our mission: We created a web site to disseminate information, for example our resurrected newsletter Forum Voice. By the way, please submit articles to the standing committee for publication in this bi-annual newsletter. We created a brochure, which has been disseminated. We made a PowerPoint overview that forum members can now share while attending conferences. We built a Forum presentation booth that is available through Westat. We also created a dissemination guide as we wanted to formalize the process by which forum products are made disseminated. In the past, we did not look at products and preplan them. We need to anticipate the medium by which we will distribute information, the audience, etc. These things

need to be thought out. This guide asks a series of questions to make the forum members think about these issues.

All of these things need to be institutionalized. We need to take responsibility for them. The web site and its maintenance will be the responsibility of the TD & C. The Newsletter will be the shared responsibility of the Steering Committee as they comprise the editorial board. We need articles and encourage all to send articles and share. The brochure will remain the property of TD & C and we will need to annually evaluate it. The PowerPoint presentation will be TD & C's responsibility and will be reviewed annually. The booth will be with NCES/Westat and we (TD & C) will review it annually. The dissemination guide will be the responsibility of PPI.

We have concluded most of the work and now need some follow up. The next meeting is the Summer Data Conference and there we will formally disband.

Question: Do we receive reports of where the booth and deliverables are used? → Yes, the booth has a survey with it so we know what conferences it has been to, etc.

One last issue: We need a new tag line for our new form logo. A small group needs to take the issue on.

Schools Interoperability Framework

Barbara Andrepont, Louisiana

The Schools Interoperability Framework is an initiative to begin to establish XML data formats in order to move educational data. (XML is an Internet HTML subset. Simply put, it is data between two tags that tells you what the item is. You can harvest data that is tagged and know what it is.) The framework consists of a group of 42 vendor companies, which is chaired by SIIA. They have an education group that coordinates the vendors.

However, there is very little participation from the clients. I think the states should join the framework and participate in the meetings. There is a cost factor: the SIIA has pricing for membership. The states' fee is 5,000 dollars and the schools' is 1,000 dollars. How do you apply for membership? Go to the SIIA web site and Sue Kamp is the education coordination person. The required membership fee helps to organize and manage the marketing and development of standards and software to move data. [Discussion of paying fees – problems politically] [Discussion on the technology – what is XML, coding, ASCII, etc.] [There is a request for a 1-3 page overview with an example] At the MIS conference, there will be a presentation: "Data Standards – So Much to Choose From," which will explain much of this. [Discussion of Zone Integration Server]

Fact Finding Discussion – Forum/Software Developers Partnership

Jill Hanson from Chancery Software, Ltd., Presenter

I am on a fact-finding mission. I joined Chancery (when?) and was charged with government reporting and meeting requirements in North America. I tried to educate Chancery about standards and requirements and showed them web sites, etc. How do standards get incorporated into software? There needs to be a dialog with vendors. How do we make them aware of the forum's products and the forum? They need to be educated about this. The software companies build the tools so they need to be informed.

Andy Rogers: What would happen to our programmers when these companies come in? How do we market the work we do? Disseminate? Having the vendors here would, perhaps, cause problems but we do need to have a dialog.

Nathan Slater: What do you (Jill) recommend? (→SIIA could represent the vendors.) Maybe we could have representatives of such a group come in and have a dialog. We could allow that brainshare in. We could really do ourselves a disservice by not allowing more brainshare here.

Other: We need the participation of the vendors.

Barbara Andrepont: We could set a time in the forum discussion where we plan their involvement. Florida and Nevada and others already have meetings with vendors to prethink and anticipate issues.

Andy Rogers: How do we do this without showing favoritism? The discussion needs to continue but I do not know how.

Jill: Identifying commonalties can be very good for software manufacturers. It makes software cheaper and more useful for all of North America.

Nathan: Perhaps an “executive briefing” is the answer, but not from individual companies. It would be better to have someone like Arthur Anderson, who would be more future looking in general, come in and could say, “Here’s what the future could be and this is what we recommend.”

Suggestion: Create vendor site so they can see new legislation, policies, forum products, handbooks, etc.

Another Look At *Technology @ Your Fingertips* and NCES Web Site

Andy Rogers, California

Jerry was supposed to do this but could not because of the weather. T @ YFT is a document that is still being requested by district and state agencies as if it is a viable piece of work, but. In actuality, it is out of date. So it needs to be redone.

Jerry updated the html and much of the glossary in the document of T @ YFT. We also looked at a few obvious things: power Macs are no longer the computer of choice and the issue may no longer be PC vs. Mac. We realized we needed to rewrite this. We propose a subcommittee/task force of a few who would meet online to rewrite each chapter. There would need to be someone to edit this and then Jerry would put it up on the web and then it would be done. It will, however, be ongoing; it will not stop. It will remain a viable, downloadable html document.

Basically, the project here is to take the document out of print, put it on the web, and redo it continually.

Suggestion: Create it also as a PDF.

Barb: Indicate where changes were so people do not get confused as the document changes.

Vote: Take on the project.